

King William Court House
King William County, Virginia

HABS No. VA-123

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District Of Virginia

Historic American Buildings Survey
Major Eugene Bradbury, District Officer, A.I.A.
210 East Franklin Street, Richmond, Virginia

KING WILLIAM COURT HOUSE
King William County, Virginia

Present Owner: King William County

Date of Erection:

Architect:

Builder: King William County

Present Condition: The building is well-preserved and in good condition. Indications show that an extension was made to the rear of the court room by a later addition. Also, that two doors in the angles where the court room joins the front portion have been removed and bricked up and windows of a later type installed in the court room. A slate roof replaces a former shingled roof. The brick water table and brick work below it down to grade have been plastered with cement mortar. An old photograph shows brick water table and base. The stone floor of the loggia has at some time been covered with a coat of cement. None of the original fittings remain in the court room and what were evidently fire-places in the corner chimneys have been bricked up.

Number of Stories: One

Materials of Construction: All walls and chimneys are built of brick, the face brick being laid in Flemish bond with glazed headers. The original brick are red with a grayish cast. The arch brick being a smooth red brick with fine joints. The extension of the court room at rear is built of red brick dissimilar to the original brick. The main exterior cornice is of wood and the roof is covered with slate. The floor of the loggia is laid with gray stone. The interior walls and ceilings are plastered as are also the walls and ceiling of the loggia.

Other Existing Records: The following extract is taken from The Executive Journals of the Council of Colonial Virginia:

"At a Council held at ye Capitol March 7th, 1722. Present were The Governour, Edmond Jennings, Phil Ludwell, Nath Harrison, Cole Digges, and John Robinson, Esquire.

"On reading at this Board a Representation from the justices of King William County setting forth that upon a Motion made for building a new Court House in the said County, their old Court House being ruinous, and two places being proposed for that purpose, The Court were divided upon ye Choice of the said places, and therefore had agreed to Submit the same to the Governour:

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And there being also read at the Board a petition of sundry of the Inhabitants of the said County, praying that the said Court House may be built on the Land of Major William Aylett, and the said Aylett offering to assure to the County the Land whereon ye said Court House shall be built together with the privilege of Timber for building of the same on any part of his adjoining Tract. The Governor was pleased to declare in Council, that in pursuance of the above submission, he did appoint the Court House for ye said County to be built on the land of Major William Aylett on Mattapony River near the said Ayletts Storehouse that being nearest the Center of the County, and most convenient to the greater number of the Inhabitants, he, ye said Aylett, complying with his aforesaid proposal of giving the Ground and privilege of Timber for building the said Court House."

In King William County Virginia, by County Council, the Court House is recorded as follows:

"The present courthouse, situated on the highway between West Point and Richmond, was the colonial courthouse for the original County of New Kent. The fact that Col. William Claiborne built his own residence within the county on the north side of the Pamunkey River at the point now known as Sweet Hall, is evidence that he naturally took great pride in the county. Its name was suggested by Kent Island, of Maryland, his relations with which are matters of history.

"This courthouse is a colonial building. The exact time of its erection is not known, but must have been prior to 1675. On January 21, 1702, one Henry Fox, who was the owner of the present "Frazier's Ferry" or "Fox's Ferry," conveyed by deed to the Justices of King William County "Two acres of land on part of which Court House now stands." This language in the deed, which is of record in the Clerk's office conclusively proves that at that date the courthouse had been built.

"The records show that the bricks for the courthouse were unloaded at Horse Landing on the Mattaponi River. It is still known as Horse Landing. On the edge of the channel of the river at that point can be seen a pile of rocks, evidently deposited by ships from England brought over as ballast."

The above deed is established as stated in the King William County Clerk's letter, dated August 21, 1936:

"We do have the deed of Henry Fox, and the language is as quoted in your letter. We have no other record evidence in this office. Signed: B. C. Garrett, Jr., Clerk."

Additional Data: The following extract is taken from King William County Virginia:

"William Aylett was clerk in the year 1702, and Edward Berkely was clerk for a period ending 1797. Robert Pollard was clerk from 1797 to 1818; Robert Pollard, Jr. 1818-1842; Robert Bird Pollard, 1842-1852; James O. Pollard, 1852-1865; William B. Pollard, 1865-1872; O. M. Winston, 1872-1887; J. C. Johnson, 1887-1893. B. C. Garrett was clerk from 1893 until his death, July 17, 1923, when his son, B. C. Garrett, Jr., succeeded him.

"On January 17, 1885, the clerk's office was destroyed by fire, together with all of the records, except a few old deed books."

Peyton Neale Clarke in his Old King William Homes and Families says:

"Among the colonial buildings in Virginia, few possess the interest of this old structure, which was built in the early part of the eighteenth century, of imported material, and in a fashion now altogether out of date. The building stands in a space enclosed by a solid brick wall, and is surrounded by trees as old as itself. Many of the most prominent lawyers in the early history of the colony fought their battles here, and great questions involving the rights and privileges of the early settlers were decided within its walls. Its old records were mostly destroyed and stolen during the late war, and a fire subsequently consumed nearly all that remained. While other counties possess more imposing judiciary structures, it is doubtful if any could produce its equal in historical reminiscence."

Bibliography:

King William County Virginia, by County Council, Published, 1925. Garrett and Massie, Richmond, Virginia.

Executive Journals of the Council of Colonial Virginia, October 25, 1721 - October 28, 1739, Volume IV. Published by the Virginia State Library, H. R. McIlwain, Editor, Richmond Division of Purchase and Printing, 1930.

Old King William Homes and Families, by Peyton Neale Clarke. John P. Marton and Company, Louisville, Kentucky. Copyright, 1897.

King William County Clerk's letter, dated August 21, 1936.

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Virginia Thompson
Historian

Approved: November 10, 1936

Eugene Bradbury
MAJOR EUGENE BRADBURY, A.I.A.
District Officer

Rec. Feb. 5, 37 HAW